

Brick School House
24 Meeting Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-191

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
91-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

BRICK SCHOOL HOUSE

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
91-

Address: 24 Meeting Street, Providence, Providence
County, Rhode Island.

Present Owner: City of Providence

Present Occupant: Providence Preservation Society

Present Use: Headquarters for the Providence Preservation
Society

Brief Statement Built in 1768, this was the first brick school
of Significance: house in Providence.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Originally built for the Proprietors of Providence; Providence was subsequently incorporated as a city, and it is now owned by the City of Providence.
2. Date of erection: 1768
3. Sources of information: Walter C. Bronson, The History of Brown University (Providence, 1914), p. 55.
John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 41, 43, 52, 62, 102.
Federal Writers' Project, Rhode Island, A Guide to the Smallest State (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), p. 266.
William R. Staples, Annals of the Town of Providence, From its First Settlement, to the Organization of the City Government in June, 1832, Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Vol. V, (Providence, 1843), pp. 496-513.
HABS Inventory prepared by John Hutchins Cady, January 24, 1957.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure

The town maintained a school in the first story of this building from 1768 to 1800. During part of that period it was leased to Brown University for a Latin School. For a time during the Revolutionary War it was used as an ammunition arsenal. When free public schools were established in 1800, this became one of four graded schools.

During the first half of the present century it served as a cooking school and an open-air school. Later it was used by Crippled Children and Adults of Rhode Island, Inc.

C. Supplemental Material: The following is quoted from Deed Book 17, page 476, in Providence City Hall:

1776 "Know all men by these presents that I, Ambrose Page of Providence in the County of Providence, mariner, and in consideration of 5 to me in hand already paid by the Town of Providence and for the encouragement of Learning therein, do covenant, promise, agree that if the said Town of Providence shall and do within the Space of three years next after Date hereof build a Good and convenient School House on the Lot in Providence whereon the Late Court House which was burnt down did stand lying near John Waterman's House that then and in such case the said Ambrose Page will give, grant and release to said Town of Providence so long as it is appropriated for that use and no Longer. And I do hereby if a School House be built on said Lot with said Term, give, grant, remise, and release and forever Quit Claim and confirm unto the said Town Providence forever, all the Estate, Right, Title Interest, Claim and Demand whatsoever which I the said Ambrose Page ever had now have, or which I, my Heirs or Assigns in Time to come, can, may, should or ought to have or Claim of, in end to the said Court House Lot To have and to hold the said released Premises (upon the conditions aforesaid) unto the said Town of Providence forever. In Witness whereof the said Ambrose Page have hereunto Set my Hand and Seale the Sixteenth Day of May One Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty-six."

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and
Elvira Gowdey for the
Providence Preservation Society
August 1962
and Osmand R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
February 1962

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a simple, two-story brick building, built in 1768 as a school house.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: Rectangular building, facing south, about 45' (five bays) x 28', two stories; entrance and stairway in 12' x 12' projection on center of south, two stories high.

2. Foundations: Rough cut stone.
3. Wall construction: Brick, common bond, painted. Brick 7" x 3" x 2", laid with narrow mortar joints. Slightly projecting brick belt course between stories.
4. Stoops: Brownstone entrance stoop on south front, four steps high.
5. Chimney: Two brick chimneys in end walls.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Doric frontispiece with pediment and fluted pilasters. Six-panel entrance door. Secondary entrance on north side.
 - b. Windows: Six over six light double hung windows in simple wood frames with molded sills, segmental brick arches over first floor windows. Large casement windows on west end of second floor on south side added later.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Hip roof, asphalt shingles. Gable roof on stairway-entrance projection.
 - b. Cornice: Simple molded cornice.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: First floor divided into one large room on west side, east side divided into four rooms used for offices, storage and toilets. Second floor, one large room and small kitchen along east side.
2. Stairways: Main stair in entrance tower, U-shape, enclosed. Rear stair in northeast cornice, enclosed, U-shape.
3. Flooring: Modern asphalt tile on first floor, later hardwood strip flooring on second floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: High horizontal board wainscot to window sill level, plaster walls and ceilings. Wood trussed ceiling on second floor apparently not original.
5. Doorways and doors: Various types in interior, wood doors.
6. Trim: Simple wood trim on doors and windows; some simple, mitered window architraves probably original.
7. Hardware: Miscellaneous later hardware.

8. Lighting: Electric.

9. Heating, Central, fireplaces on west wall closed.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Faces south on small lot that slopes from east down to west. Small yard in front. Modern parking lot in rear.
2. Enclosures: Brick wall on west, wood fences on north and south. High brick wall of adjoining building on east.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
February 1962